

A Discourse Analysis of Negotiation of Meaning in an ESL Classroom

David Boardway

CI 8695

Professor Bigelow

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

April 11, 2016

Accepted as a Plan B Paper in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Arts in the Second Language Education Program, Department of Curriculum & Instruction, University of Minnesota.

May 4, 2017

Signature

Date

A Discourse Analysis of Negotiation of Meaning in an ESL Classroom

Introduction

Current thinking in the field of language teaching advocates a communicative teaching approach, which often employs pair or small group work. One of the tenets of the approach is that students gain valuable communication experience and growth through negotiating and co-constructing meaning (Long, 1985; 1996), often with peers of differing ability levels. Students alternately can act as mentors or those being mentored, and all students experience learning at a deep level as they grapple with meaning. In communicative, student-centered language teaching approaches, the teacher is often serving as a facilitator or a guide, or may not present during most of the activity. In my experience as a language teacher, it seems teachers often get a glimpse of student interaction when we are present (sometimes acting as interlocutors), but often do not notice the mechanisms of student interaction, being concerned with our own interaction, facilitation or evaluation. In other words, we trust that the interactive activities we set up actually facilitate second language acquisition (SLA).

In order to understand how my activities facilitate SLA, I video recorded a beginning-level student and an intermediate-level English as a second language student in two different activities. The first was a jigsaw summary of a reading, in which one student was required to read a portion of a low-intermediate level reading selection and summarize it for another student. The second activity was an information gap activity, in which one student questioned another to find missing information to fill in an incomplete itinerary. I selected students who had worked well with each other in the past but were

of significantly different language abilities. My research questions were: (1) How do ESL students of differing ability interact with each other and negotiate meaning? (2) What are some of the verbal and nonverbal mechanisms (gesture, gaze, posture, movement, and facial expression), that students use to communicate during these activities? (3) How do the two activities differ in student use of these mechanisms? To answer question 1, I will record a beginning ESL student and an intermediate ESL student engaged in two different communicative exercises. To answer questions 2 and 3 above, I will look specifically at: what types of breakdowns in communication occur in each activity, what forms of negotiation of meaning occur in each activity, what types of nonverbal and verbal responses are displayed in each activity, what types of confirmation checks are displayed in each activity, and how often students self-repair in each activity.

Literature Review

Communicative Language Teaching

The field of ESL saw a shift from a linguistic structure-centered approach to a Communicative Approach in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Halliday (1973) noted that being able to communicate required both language and social abilities. Wilkins (1976) explored the use of language functions in teaching. Hymes (1971) introduced the importance of communicative competence for learners of English. Krashen (1985) suggested that language is acquired through exposure to comprehensible input and that learners learn most quickly when exposed to language that is a little above the learners comprehension ('i+1'), with implications for both teacher input and the advisability of pair and group work of mixed ability level students. Krashen also posited that a non-threatening atmosphere reduced the raising of 'affective filters' by students, which impeded

learning. This suggested the advisability of student-centered classrooms that featured pair and group work and teachers who viewed themselves as facilitators not disseminators of knowledge. Building on Krashen's work, Long (1985, 1996) suggested that difficulties of comprehension are often overcome through interactional adjustments and negotiation of meaning, where meaning is checked, clarified or modified to become comprehensible. Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis posits exchanges not only provide students opportunities to practice but also provide feedback to students about the state of their language ability and areas of evident need for modification as they notice gaps in their ability, test hypothesis about their grammar, and reflect on their performance.

Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), summarizing basic principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), noted that the teacher's role is that of facilitator and sometimes co-communicator and since a shift has been made from teacher-centered classroom to student-centered, students are seen as more responsible for their own learning, often acting as mentors for their peers. All activities are communicative in nature, and to the extent possible authentic materials are used to allow students to use language for authentic purposes. Language is viewed as communicative in nature, and so attention is paid to its forms, meanings and functions. All four skill areas are seen through the lens of negotiation of meaning with reader, writer, listener, and speaker all being viewed as participants in negotiating the meaning of communication. Teachers can evaluate student accuracy and fluency both informally through activities and formally through performance tasks that measure communicative competence.

In terms of principles of design based on communicative language teaching, the work of Wiggins and McTighe (2005) in *Understanding by Design* can be adopted by CLT classrooms as it advocates curriculum design based on the idea of the student-centered classroom advocated by the communicative approach. In their method of curriculum design instead of testing and assessment thought of as a means of testing understanding of previously studied material, consideration of assessment evidence is considered before lesson planning. In their three-part design process, first, desired results are considered before all else in terms of what students will know and what students will be able to do through study of a curriculum. Second, assessment evidence is considered. This is often in the form of authentic performance tasks. Finally, the learning plan is constructed. Learning activities are constructed from the viewpoint that the instructor is a facilitator whose perspective when designing a learning plan is dominated by consideration of the students' learning experience: their understanding of, interest in, and exploration of material through performance of meaningful tasks that result in learning. Bloom's Taxonomy can be integrated into the design process to focus learning objectives and performance tasks that challenge students to think critically and be responsible for their own learning through application of their understanding and skills to demonstrate: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. In the ESL classroom, language learning is often accomplished through study of content related material, especially at the upper levels, in which curriculum is centered on a subject area and language performance tasks take the form of presentations, group projects or research papers. The work of Wiggins and McTighe can be seen as a

natural progression of the idea that teaching should not be a teacher-centered but a student-centered endeavor, a hallmark of the communicative language approach.

Through these ideas, a communicative approach has become widely used in the field of ESL. It features a teacher's perspective that is centered on helping students attain their goals and goal and product driven instruction realized through small group work and individual performance tasks. Content-based instruction is often used where student outcomes and performance tasks are considered in curriculum planning before activities. Greater student engagement allows students to absorb the language at a deeper level and learn more rapidly. Students mentor each other as they co-construct meaning and negotiate understanding, and classrooms where the responsibility for learning is shared by students and teacher create a more equitable and cooperative dynamic that is challenging, engaging and fun for both students and teachers.

It can be seen that performance tasks are basic tools of the communicative approach, tools that carry important implications for classroom learning. Activities often employed in the typical ESL classroom are based on negotiation and co-construction of meaning. Examples of classroom activities that are designed for students to work in pairs or small groups that focus on students taking the initiative in working with content and language are jigsaws, information gap activities, cooperative decision-making activities, problem-solving activities, language games, picture stories, scrambled sentences, and role-plays. At all levels, authentic materials are used to the extent possible. This list of possible activities that are task-based and communicative in nature is limited only by the teacher's or students' imaginations. Furthermore, individual or group performance

tasks are based on student created content/language products that will be shared with other students or the teacher, such as presentations, writing assignments, and research assignments. These are seen as extensions of the idea of negotiation of meaning in that the impetus is placed on students to come to grips with both language and content as they share the results with others who will negotiate the intended meaning successfully or unsuccessfully. These activities are usually followed up by some form of comment, question and answer session or feedback from peers or teacher, which completes the negotiation process.

Examining Negotiation of Meaning

As said above, while pair or group activities dominate the landscape of ESL classrooms, teachers often do not have time to analyze the mechanisms of communication employed by students as they circulate through the classroom and act as co-communicators or evaluate student outcomes; however, studies of the mechanisms of pair and small group work have been made. Long's (1996) updated Interaction Hypothesis suggests that negotiation of meaning positively affects language learning because comprehensible input and negative feedback allow learners to modify their output and notice gaps in their language abilities. Numerous studies suggest that controlled, task based activities that focus on discrete items provide students with more opportunities for repair negotiations than more open-ended communicative tasks, in which interlocutors can avoid lexical and syntactic items that cause communicative difficulty (Nakahama, Tyler and Van Lier, 2001). However, some recent studies have begun to examine the merits of open-ended communicative tasks.

A study by Nakahama, Tyler and Van Lier (2001), examined negotiation of meaning in two different activities between nonnative speakers and native speakers: a two-way information gap activity and an unstructured conversation activity. Lexical and syntactic complexity and pragmatic issues were examined and compared quantitatively and qualitatively. Participants in the study were three Japanese intermediate level students each paired with American university graduate students. The information gap activity was a spot-the-difference problem solving task, and the conversational activity was an uncontrolled free discussion of common experiences of attending an American university. Sessions lasted between fifteen and twenty minutes and were videotaped and transcribed. The study quantified the number of repair negotiations in each type of activity and what type of error triggered the negotiation: lexical, morphosyntactic, pronunciation or global. The study concluded that while the conversational activity evidenced fewer instances of repair negotiation than the information gap activity, it offered students learning opportunities on multiple levels since students had to pay attention on the discourse level to accomplish communication. Some advantages offered by the open-ended activity were that it offered greater range of complex utterances, it provided greater context for learners' expression of pragmatic knowledge, and it was perceived as more challenging and, thus, motivating. The information gap activity placed fewer demands on students as they concentrated on discrete syntactic and lexical items and local cohesion.

Another study by Foster and Ohta (2005) looked at measures typically used to identify negotiation of meaning and suggested more rigorous definitions of these to separate them from signals of interest and encouragement. The study recorded negotiation moves (clarification requests, comprehension checks and confirmation checks) of intermediate learners of English (20 adults from a variety of L1 backgrounds studying part-time at a college in London) and intermediate learners of Japanese learners (21 American college students studying at an American university) interacting in an interview session of pairs or threes using a list of preprepared interview prompts. The five minute sessions were video recorded and transcribed. Foster and Ohta discovered that while the incidence of negotiation moves was low, students actively helped each other through co-construction, prompting and encouragement. The social functions of communication seemed to be of higher priority than accuracy. "Obtaining completely comprehensible input appeared to be of lower priority than maintaining a supportive and friendly discourse" (p. 402). The study concluded that though negotiation of meaning is important to language acquisition, it is but one of the ways that discourse competence is furthered by interaction.

The present study attempts to replicate the findings of the Nakahama, Tyler and Van Lier (2001) study finding that while an information gap activity produces more opportunity for self-repair, a more conversational activity also produces learning opportunities for students to pay attention on the discourse level to accomplish communication. It does so by quantifying communication techniques used by two ESL students of different proficiency levels working in a dyad on two different activities. Participants in this study

completed a two-way information gap activity (supply missing information) and an unstructured conversation activity (a jigsaw summary activity). These two types of activities are contrasted to understand differences in the nature of each activity as regards negotiation of meaning, co-construction of meaning, and student interaction. The study examines the way students approach each type of task and verbal techniques that they use. Like the Nakahama, Tyler and Van Lier study, this study quantifies the type of error that triggered negotiation: lexical, morphosyntactic, pronunciation or global. Unlike the Nakahama, Tyler and Van Lier study, the current study includes an examination of non-verbal aspects of communication in negotiation, repair and confirmation to see if there are differences in their use in each task. Finally, each activity is examined for ways in which social aspects of communication are enacted, such as prompting and signs of encouragement.

As a Plan B paper, I approached this paper from a more practice than literature centered perspective. I hoped to examine student interaction when the teacher is not present for personal understanding and growth in my career. To do this, I was interested in creating a transcript that would portray lexical, morphosyntactic, pronunciation elements clearly. I also wanted to include nonverbal elements to discover how they function in negotiation of meaning when students interact. I also wanted to look specifically at the incidence of student self-repair and how students recast, restate, confirm and encourage their partner when completing communicative tasks. I hoped that careful transcription would yield a clear portrait of how students interact so I could examine a phenomenon that appears fleeting in the classroom more carefully. Finally, I wanted to

contrast student performance of an Info Gap and Jigsaw activity to examine student discourse differences in each.

Methodology

The overarching methodology used in this study is linguistic discourse analysis. The underpinnings of this methodology are examination of speech as it actually occurs through recording and transcription. For inspiration, I looked to Norris (2004), Evnitskaya and Morton (2011), Handsfield and Crumpler (2013), and Gee (2011).

Participants

I selected two participants to work together, one of high beginner ability in ESL and the other of low intermediate ability. I hoped that paring students of differing ability would more clearly identify cases where communication broke down and, also, reveal greater use of recasts and restatements by the more advanced student. The high beginner, Song (a pseudonym, S in the transcript), is a Chinese female twenty-four years of age who has a BA degree in pre-school education and intends to study for an MBA after improving English skills. Her previous education in English consisted of classes in middle school and high school in China. She had not previously been in the United States or an English speaking country. She entered the program at a low beginner level three months prior to the activity. At the time of the activity, all of Song's language skills were significantly lower than the abilities of her partner, Ae-jung, a pseudonym. Ae-jung (A in the transcript), is a Korean female, thirty-four years of age, who has a BA in Landscape Architecture. She is studying English because she thinks it is an asset to have good English skills in the Forest Service and these skills will advance her career. She is in the

United States on leave from her job as Government Officer in the Korean National Forest Service. She is in the U.S. with her husband, who has a one-and-a-half year temporary posting in the United States for a Korean company. Her previous education in English consisted of classes in middle school and high school and several classes in a language school in Korea. She had not previously been in the United States or an English speaking country. She entered the program at a high beginner level one month prior to the activity. The participants knew each other and had worked together in class previously, though they did not share the same classes at the time of the activity. I had taught each student in a reading/writing class previously but was neither's teacher at the time of the study.

Tasks

Two tasks were accomplished by the students on separate occasions two weeks apart (see copies of student versions of the tasks in the Appendix). The first task was a jigsaw activity. Each student was given half of a high beginner-level reading on current trends in marketing of consumer products to women. They were given five minutes to read their selection and were allowed to use native language / English dictionaries to look up unfamiliar words. The readings were approximately 130 words each. After this preparation time, the students put away their readings and dictionaries and could not consult them during the activity. As the focus of the study, Song summarized her part of the reading for their partner, who could actively ask questions or comment to gain clarity. Both students could use paper and pencils to take notes but did not share these notes with the other during the activity.

The second task was an info gap activity. Song had incomplete information for a travel itinerary, written in table form. Ae-Jong had a complete itinerary. They were allowed two minutes to review these and use native language / English dictionaries to look up unfamiliar words. Song's task was to ask her partner for missing information using the partial information she possessed. Both students consulted their portion of the typed itinerary and used it to record answers, but they did not share these notes with the other during the activity. The emphasis of both activities focused on how well the lower-level student, Song, could perform the task and how the upper-level student, Ae-Jong, provided aid to her partner and adjusted her language to compensate for the difference in ability.

Data Collection

I video recorded the students after class in a classroom to ensure a reduction of background noise in order to make transcription easier. I stayed in the room during their discussion but did not participate because my intent was to examine how successful the pair were in negotiation of meaning without teacher participation. The Jigsaw summary took approximately 2 minutes and 52 seconds for the beginning student to accomplish. I designed the short Info Gap activity to a length that I thought would take approximately the same length of time to accomplish so that I would be comparing results of approximately the same length. Fortunately, I was on the mark and the Info Gap took 2 minutes and 55 seconds to complete.

Finally, after both activities had been accomplished, I asked the participants to fill in a brief questionnaire followed by an interview to get their reactions to the activities.

Data Analysis

This paper attempts to create an infrastructure to examine the role of language in negotiation of meaning; however, I have attempted to look at nonverbal communication beyond gesture. To do this, first, I have added notation of a fuller range of nonverbal communication. Wohlwend (2011) paraphrasing Norris (2004) identifies the following modes of communication: auditory (e.g., speech, music, and sound-effect), visual (e.g., print, image, and gaze), action (e.g., gesture, posture, movement, facial expression, touch, and manipulation of objects including mediated actions with books, writing tools, or art materials), and environmental (e.g., built environment including dress, layout [of things like furniture in a classroom or street signs at an intersection], proxemics [near/far relationships of bodies and things]). For Evnitskaya and Morton (2011), gesture can be classified in 5 types: iconic (representative), metaphoric, deictic (pointing), beat (emphasis), and interactional regulatory). I have attempted to integrate these two schematics by indicating relevant modes and gestures in the transcript.

Second, I have attempted to expand the transcript to explore multimodal communication more completely by noting nonverbal elements in a different column from verbal elements. Handsfield and Crumpler (2013) provide a useful model for adding comments in transcript to indicate nuances of nonverbal communication that would otherwise not be clear through simple notation. For example, a simple notation of <gaze shifts to eyes, shift of head> does not indicate the intent or reception of a message that clearly means misunderstanding and questioning to both parties. Like Handsfield and Crumpler, I have

created a column for noting additional contextualization and movement to explore non-verbal communication and nuance to a greater extent. I have also added a function column to make a place to indicate aspects of negotiation of meaning, such as restatements or self-repair. Final layout of the transcripts incorporates 5 columns including the following headings: *Line (L)*, *Speaker (S)*, *Verbal Transcript*, *Non-verbal*, *Function*.

For transcription I have used the conventions of the Jefferson System of Transcription Notation with an additional notation { } to note language functions. The key of notations used in my transcript are:

Key

- [] denotes speech occurring at same time
- (.) denotes pause
- (2) denotes pause with seconds indicated
- < > denotes nonverbal aspects (gesture, eye contact, gaze, etc)
- { } denotes communication function by speaker

For analysis, I have attempted to quantify forms of negotiation of meaning that were used, types of breakdown in negotiation of meaning that occurred (lexical, morphosyntactic, pronunciation, global), types of verbal and nonverbal responses that were used, and use of repair or confirmation.

For inspiration in analysis, Gee (2011) provides a rich toolkit of 28 ways of looking at transcripts that offers a framework that can be applied to any discourse analysis. I found his ways of looking at communication from multiple perspectives particularly helpful as a reference point. His first six tools are concerned with language and context. While I did not use the rules explicitly, I was impressed by these perspectives and tried to incorporate his care of looking carefully at how individuals use exact language as

communication that creates both meaning and context. Gee's Rule 7 (Doing & Not Just Saying) was the tool that spurred me to add a Nonverbal Transcript column to my transcript to explore nonverbal communication and a Function Notes column to explore language functions relevant to negotiation of meaning. Gee's Rule 9 (Why This Way Not That Way) and Rule 1 (Diexis) also resonated with me when looking at the fifth section of my transcript. In this section the speaker, seemingly, was diverging from what had come before. Looking at the purpose of this and the how it was related to the global context of the task helped me gain perspective. Finally, Gee also provides a prescription of what makes an analysis valid that is helpful in judging the validity of one's work, especially important for my analysis was the importance of tying analysis tightly to linguistic structure.

Findings

Jigsaw

The following five sections of transcription occurred in sequence, with two students (Song, the beginning student abbreviated S and Ae-jung, the intermediate student abbreviated A) involved in S summarizing a reading for A. For each section, I look at the type of communication breakdowns that occur, the forms of negotiation of meaning by the listener, the forms of repair or confirmation check by the summarizer, and the success or failure of communication.

Excerpt 1: S begins the summary:

| <i>L</i> | <i>S</i> | <i>Verbal Transcript</i> | <i>Non-verbal</i> | <i>Function</i> |
|----------|----------|--|---------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | S: | Hi (.) uh (.) I want to tell you something. (.) Ah (.) | <eye contact> | |
| 2 | | Yesterday I watched the (.) the newspaper. | <A nods encouragement> | |

- 3 I found a news (.) a news.
- 4 A: Uh huh. <eye contact,
nods
understanding>
- 5 S: Ah (.) A report say now (.) ah (.) you know some men
6 is very like enortronic products (.)
- 7 A: eee? (.) <raised hands,
blank look>
- 8 S: e (1) electronic [products] {repair}
- 9 A: [Ah huh. Yeah.] <nods
understanding>
- 10 S: electronic products <A writes>

Excerpt 1 starts well for the summary with an introductory statement, but immediately communication breaks down because of a lexical error. The listener indicates misunderstanding in three ways: with a questioning sound, with a questioning gesture and with gaze indicating misunderstanding. Repair is immediate with the correct vocabulary word (line 8, “electronic products”) and the listener indicates understanding both verbally and with gesture (line 9). This is an example of successful self-correction after multimodal signals of lack of communication.

Excerpt 2: Freedom:

| <i>L</i> | <i>S</i> | <i>Verbal Transcript</i> | <i>Non-verbal</i> | <i>Function</i> |
|----------|----------|--|---------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | S: | some men is very like | <A nods encouragement> | |
| 2 | | but now have the(.) ah (.) freedom woman | | |
| 3 | A: | um (.) | <questioning look> | |
| 4 | S: | is very like the electra (.) elec products | | |

| | | | |
|-------|---|-------------------------|------------|
| 5 A: | (1) One more. | <raises finger> | |
| 6 S: | OK. Now have freedom | <A writes> | |
| 7 A: | Free | | {recasts} |
| 8 S: | Yeah, freedom woman | | |
| 9 A: | Freedom woman? | | {restates} |
| 10 S: | Yeah. Freedom woman | <writes> | |
| 11 A: | Freedom [Ah huh] | | {restates} |
| | | <nods, writes> | |
| 12 S: | [Yeah. Uh huh.] Freedom woman (.) ah (.) like | | |
| 13 | the electronic products. | | |
| 14 A: | Umm. | <nods understanding> | |
| 15 S: | Um huh. | <nods> | |

Excerpt 2 contains both a morphosyntactic (sentence structure error) (line 1) and a lexical error (line 2). This time the listener indicates misunderstanding with a brief pause (line 3) followed by a request to repeat complete with a gesture (line 5). In the following attempt, the listener unsuccessfully recasts (line 7) then restates (line 9) the ungrammatical term settled on. In the end, communication, though ungrammatical, is successful, and both parties agree both verbally and with gesture (lines 14&15).

Excerpt 3: Buying:

| <i>L S</i> | <i>Verbal Transcript</i> | <i>Non-verbal</i> | <i>Function</i> |
|------------|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 S: | And ah (.) some people (.) some resports (.) | <A nods | |
| 2 | analysis (.) analysis (.) ah ... (.) the woman more | encouragement | |
| 3 | like a buy electnotric than men | throughout> | |
| 4 A: | (1) Ummm (5) uh huh ... | <questioning gesture, tries to | |

| | | |
|-------|--|---|
| | | write it down, smiles like she still doesn't understand> |
| 5 S: | The [woman] (.) | |
| 6 A: | [Yeah.] | <encouraging eye contact> |
| 7 S: | is very like buy (.) is very like to buy | |
| 8 A: | Yeah. | <writes> |
| 9 S: | electronic products | |
| 10 A: | Uum. | |
| 11 S: | than | |
| 12 A: | than men? | {completion} |
| 13 S: | Yeah, than men | <writes> |

In Excerpt 3, both morphosyntactic (2 sentence structure errors) and lexical errors impede communication (lines 1-3). This time the listener indicates misunderstanding with a pause, verbal cues and a questioning gesture (line 4). However, these are also accompanied by a reassuring smile and eye contact that communication will come (line 6), which it does indicated by a completion by the listener (line 12).

Excerpt 4: Own computer:

| <i>L S</i> | <i>Verbal Transcript</i> | <i>Non-verbal</i> | <i>Function</i> |
|------------|-------------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| 1 S: | Yeah. (.) Because the woman want | <A questioning frown, encouragement nods of throughout> | |
| 2 | to have (.) ah (.) want | | |
| 3 | to have to work on computer, so she | | |
| 4 | want to buy (.) ah (.) | | |
| 5 | belong own computer | | |

| | | | | |
|----|----|---|--|---|
| 6 | A: | [Ummm (1)] | <scratches head with pencil, squints eyes as if not understanding> | |
| 7 | S: | [Uh huh. Yeah, yeah.] | | {requesting comprehension & further engagement} |
| 8 | | So (.) um (.) now have a new created products | <A nods encouragement | |
| 9 | | in the (1) in the store, so many (.) | but her mouth is | |
| 10 | | um (.) woman want to try it. | open as if not completely understanding> | |
| 11 | A: | Uh huh.(.) | <nods understanding> | |

Except 4 also includes a lexical error that prevents communication (line 3). As before, the listener indicates this through verbal cues, pause, and gesture (line 6). Encouragement continues with nods of encouragement (line 8). The speaker does not attempt repair but continues on to the main idea. Initially, the listener does not seem to understand indicating this with an open-mouth gesture (line 9); however, the two ideas are connected and the listener indicates comprehension with both verbal cue and gesture (line 11).

Excerpt 5: Want to try:

| <u>L</u> | <u>S</u> | <u>Verbal Transcript</u> | <u>Non-verbal</u> | <u>Function</u> |
|----------|----------|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | S: | So do you want to try it? | | |
| 2 | A: | Try it? | | {questioning restatement} |
| 3 | S: | Try | | |

- 4 A: Try {restates}
- 5 S: Yeah, try. <writes>
- 6 A: Try {restates}
- 7 S: you want to try to
- 8 A: try to <nods
understanding,
writes>
- 9 S: yeah <nods>
- 10 A: (5) Uh (.) yeah (.) Um (2) Done? <takes notes>
<questioning hand
gesture>
- 11 S: Yeah

In Excerpt 5, encouraged by comprehension in the last section, the summarizer attempts an extension of the summary, perhaps to solidify comprehension (line 1). However, though the sentence is grammatically and lexically correct, the listener appears not to make a connection with what has come before (line 2). After two restatements are confirmed indicating that they were correctly understood (lines 4 & 6) but with a global connection still not made, the listener indicates the lack of comprehension with extended pauses (line 10), but since no repair of meaning is forthcoming and the end of the summary apparently complete, both question and gesture ask if summary is done (line 10). This section illustrates a failure of communication, though one that has not interfered with completion of the global task. Both parties seem to agree tacitly to let it go.

Info Gap

The following six sections of transcription occurred in sequence, with two students (S & A) involved in an info gap activity. One student, A, had a complete itinerary for a day's activity while on tour. The other student, S, had an incomplete itinerary and needed to ask A for details in order to complete it. For each section, I looked at the type of communication breakdowns that occur, the forms of negotiation of meaning by the listener, the forms of repair or confirmation check by the questioner, and the success or failure of communication. Throughout the activity, the questioner, S, used writing to note responses and complete the itinerary, but writing was not used for communication by either partner.

Section #1

| <i>L</i> | <i>S</i> | <i>Verbal Transcript</i> | <i>Non-verbal</i> | <i>Function</i> |
|----------|----------|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | S | Hi, S. | <eye contact, hand greeting> | |
| 2 | A | Hi. | <eye contact> | |
| 3 | S | Umm. (.) Tomorrow we can go to somewhere, | | |
| 4 | | but we are (.) we are all meeting? | <eye contact> | |
| 5 | A | Un huh, (.) Where? | | {confirmation check} |
| 6 | S | Yeah. The [place]. | | {confirmation} |
| | | | <nods, eye contact> | |
| 7 | A | [Ah] we will meet at eight o'clock (.) | | |
| 8 | | in front of the (.) in front of hotel. (2) | | |
| 9 | | And we will walk to pottery center. | <eye contact> | |
| 10 | S | Yes. But I don't know the (.) place where. | <eye contact> | |
| 11 | A | In front of hotel. | <eye contact> | |

- 12 S In front of hotel. {restates}
{confirmation}
- 13 A [Un huh.] <nods> {confirmation}
- 14 S [Yeah.] OK. (.) {confirmation}

Section 1 starts well with S roleplaying her part (lines 1-4). Her initial question in grammatically incorrect (line 4), but after A confirms that it is a question about place (line 5), the answer is forthcoming. This is an example of the opportunity for the speaker to recognize that incorrect question forms impede her ability to communicate. Proponents of the use of info gap exercises for co-construction of meaning exercises see this type of recognition as important feedback for students. It is thought that though they may not make immediate repair, as in this case, continued recognition creates understanding and growth in language ability. S, who is of lower ability, does not hear the information she is looking for (line 10), perhaps because her partner speaks too fast: however, after stating she did not get it (line 10), the answer is forthcoming (line 11). She then restates the information to confirm her understanding (line 12). Both reconfirm again, A nodding as well (line 13 & 14). This short section contains a confirmation check (line 5) and four confirmations (lines 6, 12, 13, 14), illustrating how in info gap activities where uncertainty of information occurs, students carefully negotiate and renegotiate meaning to obtain communication. This section also exhibits a minimum of nonverbal communication with only nods and eye contact used to reinforce communication; however, not appearing in the transcript is the fact that much of this communication was lost as the partners looked at their itineraries nearly constantly while listening.

Section #2

| <i>L</i> | <i>S</i> | <i>Verbal Transcript</i> | <i>Non-verbal</i> | <i>Function</i> |
|----------|----------|--|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | S | Ah (.) In the (.) | | |
| 2 | A | | <encouraging eye contact> | |
| 3 | S | I remember in the nine-thirty | <eye contact> | |
| 4 | A | Un. | <encouraging eye contact> | |
| 5 | S | we have the actives coffee break, right? | <nods> | |
| 6 | A | Yeah. | <nods> | {confirmation} |
| 7 | S | So (.) where? | <eye contact> | |
| 8 | A | Ah (.) Swan Coffee Shop. | <nods> | |
| 9 | S | Swan [Coffee Shop.] | | {restates} {confirmation} |
| 10 | A | [Yeah.] | <nods> | {confirmation} |
| 11 | S | I got it. | | {confirmation} |

In Section 2, S still is not using complete questions to communicate (line 5); however, it does not impede communication. Information is sought and delivered quickly and efficiently (lines 1-6). As in Section 1, a similar pattern occurs in this section with a restatement used for confirmation followed by verbal confirmations (lines 9-11). This section also is similar to section 1 in lack of multimodal communication other than eye contact and nods used to reinforce communication.

Section #3

| <i>L</i> | <i>S</i> | <i>Verbal Transcript</i> | <i>Non-verbal</i> | <i>Function</i> |
|----------|----------|---|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | S | And ten have an activity | | |
| 2 | | at Water Market to buy something | <eye contact> | |
| 3 | A | Umm (.) Ah (.) the name is New River Market | <nods> | |
| 4 | S | OK (.) umm (.) Let me see. (2) | | |
| 5 | | In the lunch time (.) ah (.) | | |
| 6 | A | | <nods encouragement> | |
| 7 | S | we need to prepare how much money? | <eye contact> | |
| 8 | A | Ah (.) the meal set is for (.) ah (2) | <looks upward, eye contact> | |
| 9 | | ten to twenty dollars. | | |
| 10 | S | ten to twenty dollars. | | {restates} {confirmation} |
| 11 | A | [Yeah.] | <nods> | {confirmation} |

In Section 3 also there is a lack of question forms, but communication proceeds swiftly (lines 1-9). There is a restatement for confirmation (line 10) followed by a nod for reconfirmation Line 11). Nonverbal communication follows the pattern of the first two sections.

Section #4

| <i>L</i> | <i>S</i> | <i>Verbal Transcript</i> | <i>Non-verbal</i> | <i>Function</i> |
|----------|----------|--|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | S | [OK.] (.) Oh, by the way, I forget, | | |
| 2 | | in the eight to ten, right, | <clasps hands to to chest> | |
| 3 | | we visit a pottery center, right? | | |
| 4 | A | pottery center? | | {restates} |
| 5 | S | Yeah. But I didn't for (.) | | |
| 6 | | I just want forget to ask you the (.) how much dollar. | <hands gestures of encouragement, | |

| | | | |
|----|---|---|---------------------------------|
| | | eye contact> | |
| 7 | A | [Ah (2)] | {lack of understanding} |
| 8 | S | [is eight] ten clock | <eye contact> |
| 9 | A | Ah (.) [And] | {lack of understanding} |
| 10 | S | [Yeah] | |
| 11 | A | Ah (.) the co (.) we need (.) ah (.) | |
| 12 | | fifteen dollars (.) ah (.) to decorate the pot. | |
| 13 | S | [OK.] | {confirmation} |
| 14 | A | [fifteen] dollars. | {restates} {confirmation} |
| | | <eye contact> | |
| 15 | S | I got it. Thank you. | <eye contact> {confirmation} |
| 16 | A | Yeah. | <smiles> |

In Section 4, S's lack of use of complete question forms again impedes communication (lines 1—4). Her partner may be guessing the missing information because S supplies all of the other information (line 4). This section includes two restatements (lines 4&14) and three confirmations for clarity (lines 13, 14, 15), following the pattern of the first three sections where communication is carefully monitored as it is negotiated. This section displays more multimodal communication than the three previous sections with hand gestures added to encourage communication and continued involvement (lines 1&6). At the end of the exchange, eye contact and a smile solidify confirmation (lines 15&16).

Section #5

| <i>L</i> | <i>S</i> | <i>Verbal Transcript</i> | <i>Non-verbal</i> | <i>Function</i> |
|----------|----------|---|---|----------------------------|
| 1 | S | OK, and after we have the activity | | |
| 2 | A | Un | <encouraging smile> | |
| 3 | S | so the first (.) ah (.) umm (2) we will go (2) where? | <hands gestures of encouragement, eye contact> | |
| 4 | A | Ah (5) I don't (2) | <squinting eyes, tilting head, questioning look, shrugs shoulders> | {lack of understanding} |
| 5 | S | And after (.) | <eye contact> | |
| 6 | A | Un | <encouraging smile> | |
| 7 | S | activity | <eye contact, nods encouragement> | |
| 8 | A | after activity | | {restates} |
| 9 | S | Yeah. | < encouraging eye contact> | |
| 10 | A | [What time?] | | |
| 11 | S | [Where going] Where are we going? | < continued eye contact> | {repair} |
| 12 | A | What time? | | |
| 13 | S | Ah (.) I remember (.) ah (.) told me one clock. | < continued eye contact, nods> | |
| 14 | A | Ah (2) one o'clock (.) ah (.) | | {restates} |
| 15 | | we are going to Riverside Drive (.) to (.) ah (.) | | {confirmation} |
| 16 | | and at the time a tour guide is provided | <eye contact> | |

In Section 5, lack of use of a complete question form continues to impede communication (lines 1-3); however, S finally repairs her error by supplying a complete question (line 11). This pattern of language error followed by immediate feedback by a partner followed by the recognition of language error followed by repair of error is an important advantage of use of info gap exercises. Presumably, consciously or unconsciously, following the exercise S will reflect on the fact that lack of complete question forms impeded her communication. The resort to the successful use of a more complete question form (line 11) in this exchange reinforces this understanding and eventually complete question forms will become an easy tool for use in her language toolkit. The section includes two restatements to negotiate communication (lines 8&14), one as a confirmation (line 14). Eye contact and nods continue, but in this more difficult exchange for the pair, more nonverbal communication is resorted to with hand gesture (line 3), squinting eyes (line 4), tilting head (line 4) and shrug of shoulders (line 4) being employed. It would seem that as verbal communication breaks down, multimodal communication is added to supplement and negotiate meaning.

Section #6

| <i>L</i> | <i>S</i> | <i>Verbal Transcript</i> | <i>Non-verbal</i> | <i>Function</i> |
|----------|----------|---|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | S | [OK.] | | {confirmation} |
| 2 | A | [at] one o'clock. | | {restates} |
| | | | <nods> | {confirmation} |
| 3 | S | And when the (.) win and cheese tasting | | |
| 4 | A | Un huh. | <nods | |

| | | | |
|----|---|--|---|
| | | encouragement> | |
| 5 | S | in the Owl Winstudy (.) we need to (.) | |
| 6 | A | Un huh. | <encouraging smile> |
| 7 | S | bring how much money? | <eye contact> |
| 8 | A | Ah (.) Yeah (.) we need (.) ah (3) thir (.) thirty dollars | <looks upward> |
| 9 | S | Un huh. | {confirmation} <eye contact, nods> |
| 10 | A | Yeah. (3) to take in and thirty dollars. | {restates} {reconfirmation} <eye contact> |

Section 6 continues with questions about the wine and cheese tasting activity. It opens with a pair of confirmations (lines 1&2) and a restatement (line 2) solidifying the exchange of information in the previous section. S continues to her last piece of missing information. She has difficulty with sentence structure and question form but adds enough information to be able to negotiate a need for specific information (lines 3-7) and receive it from her partner (line 8). Her understanding is confirmed both verbally and with eye contact and a nod (line 9), and her partner reconfirms for surety (line 10).

Discussion

Jigsaw

In each of the forgoing sections of the transcript a communication breakdown occurred. Nakahama, Tyler and Van Lier (2001) identify four ways in which negotiation of meaning typically breaks down: lexical (lexical items and word choice), morphosyntactic (grammatical errors), pronunciation, and global (confusion of anaphoric reference,

deixis, context, interpretation or other global elements). Charting the significant ways in which breakdown occurred in the transcript,

Types of Breakdown in Negotiation of Meaning

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| lexical | 5 |
| morphosyntactic | 3 |
| pronunciation | 0 |
| global | 1 |

it can be seen that lexical errors were the most common with morphosyntactic errors also prevalent. These seemed to be due to sentence structure errors. A global error impeded communication in the last section (i.e., Want to buy). It can be concluded that global errors occur in beginning-level ESL discourse, though in this exercise they appear to a lesser extent than lexical and morphosyntactic errors.

Turning to the forms of negotiation of meaning by the listener, the listener references understanding in the following ways:

Forms of Negotiation of Meaning by Listener (Ae-jung, Intermediate Student)

Encouragement by listener

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Gesture | 5 |
| Gaze | 2 |
| Verbal (sound) | 0 |
| Verbal (syntactic) | 0 |

Understanding confirmation by listener

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Gesture | 5 |
| Gaze | 0 |
| Verbal (sound) | 4 |
| Verbal (syntactic) | 6 |
| Restatement | 2 |
| Completion | 1 |
| “yeah” | 3 |

Lack of understanding indication by listener

| | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Gesture | 8 | |
| Gaze | 3 | |
| Verbal (sound) | 6 | |
| Verbal (syntactic) | 4 | |
| | Restatement | 2 |
| | Recast (say in a different manner) | 1 |
| | Request for restatement or repair | 1 |

Encouragement was given in gesture and gaze only. Understanding was indicated most often verbally but also by gesture. Syntactic verbal confirmation was more often used than sounds in the form of restatement, completion and “yeah”. Lack of understanding was shown almost equally by gesture/gaze and verbal indicators. Verbal indicators include sound cues as well as syntactic cues, which included restatements, recasts and requests, though none of these were in full sentence form. The above indicates a very active role for the listener even though listening and comprehension was the primary role in the exercise. Recapping this role in terms of response by the listener,

Response Types by Listener (Ae-jung, Intermediate Student)

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| Gesture | 18 |
| Gaze | 5 |
| Verbal (sound) | 10 |
| Verbal (syntactic) | 10 |

it can be seen that gaze/gesture/verbal(sound) played a more prominent role in communication than syntactic responses.

Looking at the use of repair or confirmation check by the summarizer,

Use of Repair or Confirmation by Summarizer (Song, Beginning Student)

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Repair | 1 |
| Confirmation check | |
| Gesture | 0 |
| Gaze | 0 |
| Verbal (sound) | 3 |
| Verbal (syntactic) | 5 |

it can be seen repair was minimal though the session lasted nearly 3 minutes (2:50).

Gaze/gesture were also lacking. Syntactic confirmation checks outweighed verbal (sound) checks. These findings are in contrast to the response by the listener, which tended to emphasize gaze/gesture/verbal(sound) over syntactic responses. This seems odd given the fact that the listener was more advanced in English skill. It might be that the nature of jigsaw (someone summarizing information unknown to a partner) encourages more speaking on the part of the summarizer and more nonverbal communication on the part of the listener. It would be interesting to contrast these findings with other information gap and conversational activities.

Finally, it can be suggested that communication in the jigsaw was successful in the first four sections above. Difficulties with lexical items and syntax were overcome through both verbal and nonverbal communication. Syntactic verbal negotiation on the part of the listener were accomplished through a combination of restatement, completion, recast, request and confirmation. On the listener's part, confirmation requests were accomplished completely verbally, and repair was only made one time. In contrast, when the summarizer attempted an extension to solidify meaning on a global basis in the final section, communication broke down.

Info Gap

In each of the forgoing sections a communication breakdown occurred. As in the jigsaw, I charted the four ways in which negotiation of meaning typically breaks down: lexical (lexical items and word choice), morphosyntactic (grammatical errors), pronunciation, and global (confusion of anaphoric reference, deixis, context, interpretation or other global elements).

Types of Breakdown in Negotiation of Meaning

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| lexical | 0 |
| morphosyntactic | 4 |
| pronunciation | 0 |
| global | 0 |

It can be seen that all breakdowns that occurred were due to morphosyntactic factors: lack of question form and sentence structure error and perhaps. It can be suggested that info gap activities such as this one clearly pinpoint for speakers morphosyntactic errors that can be the focus of further practice or study.

Turning to the forms of negotiation of meaning by the listener, who had the information being sought, the listener references understanding in the following ways:

Forms of Negotiation of Meaning by Listener (Ae-jung, Intermediate Student)

Encouragement by listener

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Gesture | 2 |
| Gaze | 4 |
| Verbal (sound) | 4 |
| Verbal (syntactic) | 2 |

Understanding confirmation by listener

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| Gesture | 5 |
| Gaze | 3 |
| Verbal (sound) | 0 |
| Verbal (syntactic) | 12 |

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Restatement | 8 |
| Completion | 0 |
| “yeah” “uh huh” | 4 |

Lack of understanding indication by listener

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Gesture | 4 |
| Gaze | 0 |
| Verbal (sound) | 3 |
| Verbal (syntactic) | 1 |

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Restatement | 0 |
| Recast (say in a different manner) | 0 |
| Request for restatement or repair | 1 |

Encouragement by the listener was given in a variety of ways equally split between verbal and nonverbal responses. Understanding confirmation by listener was given more verbally than nonverbally with verbal (syntactic) being the predominant response; however, the listener indicated lack of understanding equally between gesture and verbal responses. In total, it can be seen that verbal (syntactic) responses were relied upon by the listener for confirmation, but responses were more balanced between gesture/gaze and verbal were employed to show encouragement or lack of understanding. The overall balance can be seen in the following table:

Response Types by Listener (Ae-jung, Intermediate Student)

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| Gesture | 11 |
| Gaze | 7 |
| Verbal (sound) | 7 |
| Verbal (syntactic) | 15 |

Looking at the use of repair or confirmation check by the questioner, who required information,

Use of Repair or Confirmation by Questioner (Song, Beginning Student)

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| Repair | 1 |
| Confirmation check | |
| Gesture | 2 |
| Gaze | 2 |
| Verbal (sound) | 0 |
| Verbal (syntactic) | 10 |

it can be seen that there was only one case of repair. Though repair was lacking, it can be suggested that recognition of recurring morphosyntactic errors probably did occur, which is the first step in language growth. Confirmation was signaled with gestures, gaze and verbal (syntactic) communication. There were ten verbal (syntactic) confirmations with four in the form of restatements. Both partners used restatements extensively as they negotiated communication, presumably for clarity's sake.

Finally, it can be suggested that communication in the info gap activity was successful. Though not always grammatically correct, communication was accomplished quickly and efficiently.

Comparison of the Two Activities

Combined tables from discussion:

Types of Breakdown in Negotiation of Meaning

| | Jigsaw | Info Gap |
|-----------------|--------|----------|
| lexical | 5 | 0 |
| morphosyntactic | 3 | 4 |
| pronunciation | 0 | 0 |
| global | 1 | 0 |

Forms of Negotiation of Meaning by Listener (Ae-jung, Intermediate Student)

Encouragement by listener

| | Jigsaw | Info Gap |
|--------------------|--------|----------|
| Gesture | 5 | 2 |
| Gaze | 2 | 4 |
| Verbal (sound) | 0 | 4 |
| Verbal (syntactic) | 0 | 2 |

Understanding confirmation by listener

| | Jigsaw | Info Gap |
|--------------------|--------|----------|
| Gesture | 5 | 5 |
| Gaze | 0 | 3 |
| Verbal (sound) | 4 | 0 |
| Verbal (syntactic) | 6 | 12 |

| | Jigsaw | Info Gap |
|-------------|--------|----------|
| Restatement | 2 | 8 |
| Completion | 1 | 0 |
| "yeah" | 3 | 4 |

Lack of understanding indication by listener

| | Jigsaw | Info Gap |
|--------------------|--------|----------|
| Gesture | 8 | 4 |
| Gaze | 3 | 0 |
| Verbal (sound) | 6 | 3 |
| Verbal (syntactic) | 4 | 1 |

| | Jigsaw | Info Gap |
|---------------------------------|--------|----------|
| Restatement | 2 | 0 |
| Recast | 1 | 0 |
| Request for restatement, repair | 1 | 1 |

Response Types by Listener (Ae-jung, Intermediate Student)

| | Jigsaw | Info Gap |
|--------------------|--------|----------|
| Gesture | 18 | 11 |
| Gaze | 5 | 7 |
| Verbal (sound) | 10 | 7 |
| Verbal (syntactic) | 10 | 15 |

Use of Repair or Confirmation by Summarizer/Questioner (Song, Beginning Student)

| | Jigsaw | Info Gap |
|--------------------|--------|----------|
| Repair | 1 | 1 |
| Confirmation check | | |
| Gesture | 0 | 2 |

| | | |
|--------------------|---|----|
| Gaze | 0 | 2 |
| Verbal (sound) | 3 | 0 |
| Verbal (syntactic) | 5 | 10 |

If we compare the two activities, it seems that the jigsaw presented a more challenging activity for both partners. The open-ended format of a summary opposed to the security of blanks to be filled accompanied by shared information would account for this. However, in both cases communication was successful. The pair accommodated each other's weaknesses in language ability, showed encouragement frequently and finally were able to negotiate meaning and construct understanding.

In contrast, the type of breakdown of communication contrasts greatly between the two activities. In the jigsaw types of breakdown were split between lexical, morpho-syntactic and global misunderstanding. However, in the info gap activity, breakdown was solely morphosyntactic. This difference illustrates the advantage of info gap activities in pinpointing morphosyntactic errors for students to grapple with and reflect on. However, advantage can also be seen in the use of more globally communicative activities for pinpointing lexical and context related shortcomings for students to consider. These activities are similar to most communication they do in daily life.

Encouragement was given by the listener in the jigsaw only in gesture/gaze, while it was given in a more balanced way in the info gap activity through both gesture/gaze and verbal responses. This can probably be explained by the use of the itineraries by the participants, who must have realized that the import of gesture and gaze was lost as each focused on their papers.

Understanding confirmation by the listener was balanced in both activities; however, verbal (syntactic) responses were relied on much more by the listener in the info gap activity, especially in the form of restatements (2 jigsaw, 8 info gap in 3 minutes of speaking). In this, we see the advantage of info gap activities in providing the questioner with feedback that accurately identifies the spot in which communication breaks down so that they can recognize areas where improvement in language skills are needed.

Lack of understanding by the listener was indicated in a balanced way between gesture/gaze and verbal responses in both activities; however, there was much more lack of understanding in the jigsaw (21 jigsaw, 8 info gap) reflecting the difference in difficulty presented by the jigsaw activity, which did not present clear shared information or format to scaffold understanding. This reflects most clearly the different usefulnesses of the two types of activity: jigsaw for honing global communication skills that rely on context, lexical knowledge and communicative competence and info gap for pinpointing areas (especially morphosyntactic) where breakdown occurs and improvement is needed, the opportunity for noticing by the speaker.

This usefulness can also be reflected on by the type of repair by the summarizer/questioner in the activities. In both activities repair was given only once. This one time is of value to the speaker and reflects an area where morphosyntactic solidification is in progress. As for the other areas of breakdown, it is assumed that noticing has occurred and is useful to the student.

Confirmation checks by the summarizer/questioner were more syntactic in nature in the info gap activity (5 jigsaw, 10 info gap), reflecting the need for more precise confirmation in the info gap, which demands identification and confirmation of discreet information.

In both activities I was surprised at the lack of use of complete question forms by both students. Though these activities demanded questioning to complete understanding or gather precise information, both the high-beginning level student and the intermediate level student defaulted to partial question forms. Complete question forms were rare. Though it can be said that question forms remain difficult to master throughout the intermediate phase of English language learning, it is as if engaged in the activity, these students both avoided a language weakness for the sake of a faster, successful communication. In the negotiation of meaning, lack of grammatical correctness in question forms seems to have been agreed upon tacitly.

Student Questionnaire Responses after Completion of Activities

After both activities had been accomplished, I asked the participants to fill in a brief questionnaire followed by an interview. The results are as follows. (1) Both students found the jigsaw and the info gap useful activities for their English studies. The summarizer/questioner, who was of lower ability, found the info gap more useful because it reflected activities that she practiced in class and on tests. Furthermore, she found the activity more difficult because she felt her listening ability is weak. In contrast, the listener found the jigsaw more useful because the activity connected reading comprehension and communication skill. She also found the jigsaw more difficult because of

the difficulty of communicating information to a partner and lack of context clues in understanding what her partner said. (2) When asked which activity was more fun, the summarizer/questioner found the jigsaw more fun while the listener found the info gap more fun because it was easier for her. (3) When asked if after the jigsaw there were any specific language weaknesses that she would like to improve, the summarizer/questioner replied general listening, speaking and writing skills, while the listener replied she needed to enrich her vocabulary. These two replies reflect the more general, communicative nature of the task. (4) When asked if after the info gap there were any specific language weaknesses that she would like to improve, the summarizer/questioner replied listening ability and time and numbers while the listener replied prepositions. The more specific replies about the info gap activity bolster the claim that info gap activities help students focus on discreet weaknesses in their language ability.

Implications for Language Teaching and Further Research

Analysis of the jigsaw and info gap sessions surprised me in several ways. First, it surprised me that there were a lack of question forms. I had expected a greater reliance on these, especially for the intermediate student. This lack of usage illustrates the fact that question forms remain a difficulty for intermediate students. It would be interesting to study whether adding more discreet practice of question forms to the communicative language curriculum might improve usage of these.

I was also surprised that the listener used more nonverbal than syntactic verbal elements in responses in the jigsaw. The listener in the task was the more advanced student of the pair yet relied on syntax less. This may be due to the nature of jigsaw. I

would like to compare these findings with other information gap and conversational activities to confirm this. Further, I was surprised by the prevalence of multimodal communication in both activities. It was not until I videotaped activities that I realized how prevalent. After years of being involved in communicative language teaching, I had been focused solely on lexical, morphosyntactic, pronunciation and context. This has led me to reflect on the variety of other tools that students have in their toolkits that help them co-construct meaning: gesture/gaze, encouragement, cooperation in anticipating and understanding others' errors, and knowledge bases other than syntactic English — the human elements upon which communication and cooperation hinge.

It was not surprising that lexicon and syntax proved most challenging for the beginning student in accomplishment these tasks. This would indicate that important focuses of class for beginning students should be vocabulary building and speaking in complete sentences. Sentence structure errors seemed a big stumbling block. It was also not surprising that the attempt at connecting the jigsaw on a global scale did not work. It might have been too difficult for the listener to think outside the immediate box of lexical and syntactic difficulties to see what the speaker was attempting. Still, it was reassuring to see that, indeed, negotiation of meaning was within reach despite the content being difficult for the student who accomplished the summary. Indeed, it was reassuring that in both instances communication was accomplished.

The study confirmed the usefulness of info gap activities to focus students' attention on discrete morphosyntactic elements that they have difficulty with. Noticing these

repeatedly through this type of activity surely is of value for students to notice shortcomings and improve.

There can be an argument made that the more open-ended nature of jigsaws and other forms of communicative activities also are of value in addressing a wider range of communication skills, such as lexical, morphosyntactic, and global issues. The blending of discrete item activities with more communicative activities that is practiced currently in communicative language teaching was confirmed as good practice.

Limitations and Conclusion

Discourse analysis offers great potential to reveal language learning and classroom interaction not as monolithic activities that fit one-size-fits-all theories but as activities where individuals co-create meaning and, indeed, co-create learning. This study analyzed two different communicative language activities in terms of types of breakdown of communication, forms of negotiation of meaning by the listener, forms of response by the listener, and use of repair and confirmation by the speaker. That said, there are a number of limitations to this study. These were two very brief sessions, and it is difficult to justify broad generalizations on such short exchanges. Too, the nature of the tasks could have affected the performance of the students. Easier or harder tasks might have affected performances, especially in the case of the jigsaw, which appeared a bit challenging to the beginning student. In addition, in any study of this type, individual learning styles and differences can affect task outcomes, as can the ways in which individual

personalities interact. The two students whom I paired like each other and work well together; however, I felt that the beginning student felt a little intimidated by her more experienced partner.'s abilities.

That being said, the jigsaw activity revealed that global, open-ended activities, while difficult, reveal to students a variety of impediments to communication to notice and improve on: lexical, morphosyntactic and global elements. They also present them with challenging exercises that can reinforce their confidence in the ability to cooperate with others and communicate. The info gap activity revealed that this type of activity does have the ability to reveal discreet error types for students to notice, reflect on and improve more than more open-ended communicative activities as suggested by Nakahama, Tyler and Van Lier (2001) in their study. Both activities presented the students with a challenge of communication and cooperation. In both activities the students were able to overcome language difficulties to negotiate meaning and successfully communicate.

I found that my students of differing ability interacted well together and negotiated meaning effectively. They also interacted with each other in some ways that surprised me. They used a discourse that relied much more on multimodality than I expected, and their verbal discourse was more incomplete than I had expected, especially as regards question forms. The ways in which the two activities differed in student use of discourse confirm the conclusions of Nakahama, Tyler and Van Lier (2001) in their study. The jigsaw allowed students to focus on more global aspects of discourse while the info gap provided an opportunity for them to focus on finer aspects of language use.

I was gratified that both students felt that each of these activities was of value to their studies and fun as well. I was also pleased that both had reflected on their performance after the session. I am grateful for their participation. Their cheerful cooperation and interest in the result made me reflect on the fact that the dynamic of teacher/student and student/student is what makes language teaching so interesting and so much fun.

References

- Creese, A. (2005). Mediating allegations of racism in a multiethnic London school: What speech communities and communities of practice can tell us about discourse and power. In D.P. Barton and K. Tusting (Eds.), *Beyond communities of practice*. (pp. 55-76). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Evinitskaya, N. and Morton, T. (2011). Knowledge construction, meaning making and interaction in CLIL science classroom communities of practice. *Language and Education*, 25(2), 109-127.
- Foster, P. and Ohta, A. S. (2005), Negotiation for meaning and peer assistance in second language classrooms. *Applied Linguistics* 26(3), 402–430.
- Gee, J. P. (2011). *How to do Discourse Analysis: A Toolkit*. New York: Routledge.
- Krashen, S. D. (1985). *The input hypothesis*. London/ New York: Longman.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1973). *Explorations in the functions of language*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hansfield, L.J. and Crumpler, T. P. (2013). “Dude, it’s not a appropriate word”: Negotiating word meanings, language ideologies, and identities in a literature discussion group. *Linguistics and Education*, 24, 112-130.
- Hymes, D. (1971). Competence and performance in linguistic theory. In R. Huxley and E. Ingram (Eds.), *Language acquisition: Models and Methods*. London: Academic Press.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. and Anderson, M. (2011). *Techniques and principles in language teaching* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Long, M. H. (1985). Input and second language acquisition theory. In S. Gass, and C. Madden (Eds.), *Input and second language acquisition*. (pp. 268-286). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Long, M. H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. C. Ritchie and T. K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 413–468). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Mackey, A. (2000). Beyond production: Learners’ perceptions about interactional processes. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 37(3-4), 379-394.
- McTighe, J, and Wiggins, G. (2004). *Understanding by design: Professional development workbook*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD

- Nakahama, Y., Tyler, A and Van Lier, L (2001). Negotiation of meaning in conversational and information gap activities: a comparative discourse analysis. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35(3), 377-405.
- Norris, S. (2006). Multiparty interaction: A multimodal perspective on relevance. *Discourse Studies*, 8(3), 401-421.
- Sarosy, P. and Sherak, K. (2006). *Lecture Ready 2*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.
- Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and output in its development. In S. M. Gass, and C. G. Madden (Eds.), *Input and second language acquisition*. (pp 115-132). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Wiggins, G. and McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design*. Columbus, OH: Pearson Education, Ltd.
- Wilkins, D. (1976). *National syllabuses*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wohlwend, K. E. (2011). Mapping modes in children's play and design: An action-oriented approach to critical multimodal analysis. In R. Rogers (Ed.), *An introduction to critical discourse analysis in education* (2nd ed.). (pp. 1-38) Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Appendix

Jigsaw Text for Student Summary

Read the following text and summarize the content for your partner.

Until very recently, the electronics market consisted mostly of men. Today, however, women are some of the biggest consumers of computers and other electronic products. With more and more women working and in control of their own and their family's money, women now want to have a say in the type of electronics that they have in their homes. Some experts report that women are actually buying more electronics than men. A recent study by the Consumer Electronics Association reports another interesting development. It states that almost a third of the new and more innovative electronics are sold to women. So, not only are women becoming more interested in electronics purchases in general, but they are also increasingly willing to try the latest products.

From "Women Enter the Electronics Market" Sarosy, P. and Sherak, K. (2006).
Lecture Ready 2, (p. 3)

Information Gap Exercise (Full Itinerary)

Answer your partner's questions about this tour itinerary.

| Time | Activity | Place | Details |
|--------------|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 8:00 | Meet | In front of hotel | Take a bus to Harris Art Museum |
| 8:15 | Guided Tour | Harris Art Museum | Entrance fee = \$20 |
| 10:30 | Walk to Old Town | From museum entrance | 15 minute walk |
| 10:45 | Explore Old Town | Old Town Center | Small groups of your choosing |
| 1:00 | Lunch | The Hungry Lion | Buffet for \$20 |
| 2:00 | Tour the Castle | Weathers Castle | A tour guide is provided |
| 3:00 1740 | Tour formal gardens | Sunnydale Gardens | Gardens were designed in |
| 4:00 | Tea Time | The Happy Dove | Try the delicious pastries |
| 5:00 | Return to hotel | Meet at the Clock Tower | Please don't be late |
| 6:00 | Dinner | Hotel restaurant | Complimentary dinner |

Information Gap Exercise (With Information Missing)

Ask your partner for the missing information about this tour itinerary.

| Time | Activity | Place | Details |
|-------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 8:00 | Meet | _____ | Take a bus to Harris Art Museum |
| 8:15 | Guided Tour | Harris Art Museum | Entrance fee = \$_____ |
| 10:30 | Walk to Old Town | From museum entrance | _____ minute walk |
| _____ | Explore Old Town | Old Town Center | Small groups of your choosing |
| 1:00 | Lunch | The Hungry Lion | _____ for \$20 |
| 2:00 | Tour the Castle | _____ | A tour guide is provided |
| 3:00 | Tour formal gardens | Sunnydale Gardens | Gardens were designed in _____ |
| 4:00 | Tea Time _____ | The Happy Dove | Try the delicious |
| 5:00 | Return to hotel | Meet at _____ | Please don't be late |
| 6:00 | Dinner | _____ | Complimentary dinner |